



making the bed





# It rests with you



This zine combines my own writing and photos of beds with (public domain) images from Wellcome Collection.

It was made as part of my PhD research with Wellcome's zine collection.

Lea Cooper, 2024

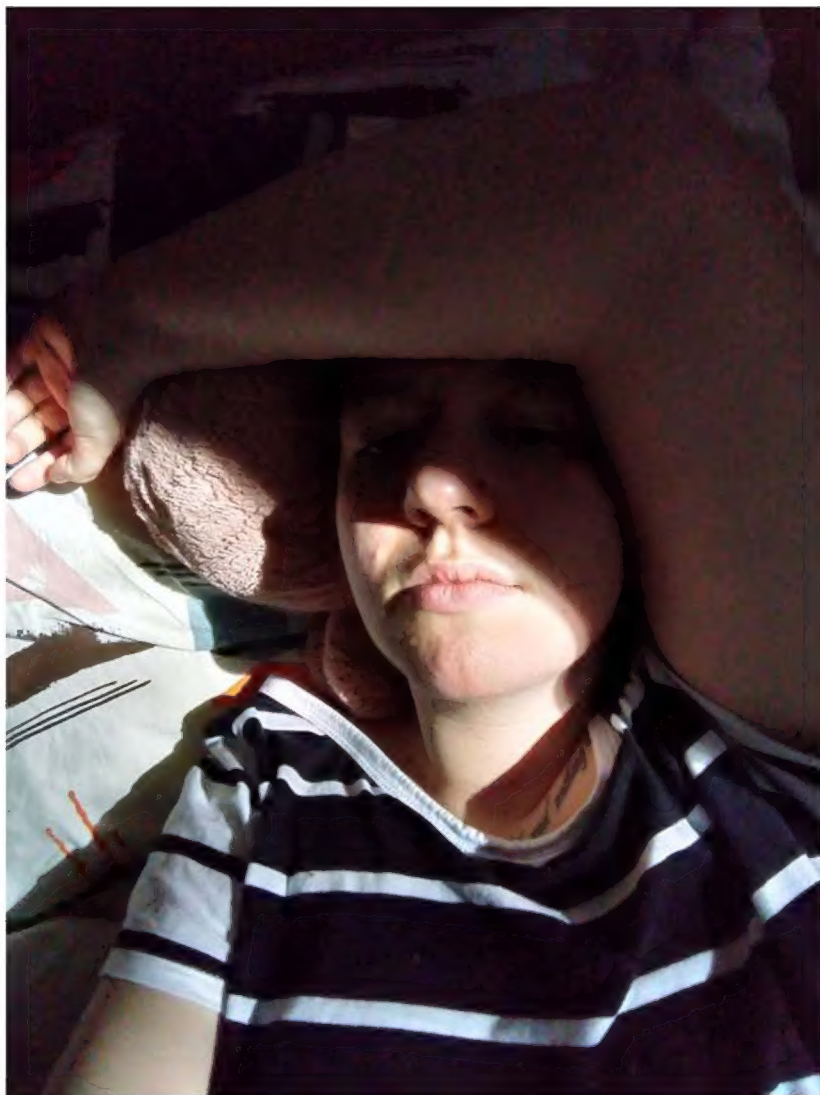
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## **Dunbar Place**

I applied for my PhD from bed. We were staying in a ground floor flat that we rented off the boyfriend of the sister of a friend of ours. Like lots of flats in Kirkcaldy, it was one of four that made up a detached house. It was built into a hillside, on the Raith estate, a little out of town, off the New Road (which by that point wasn't that new anymore). It was a dark house. Our bedroom was at the back and cast in shadow most of the day, but in the late afternoon, with the sun low in the winter sky, light would stream through the window. During the first UK COVID lockdown, I spent a lot of time lying in this bed, heavy and tired with anxiety. It was a small flat and I could hear if my Teams pinged on my desk in the front room, but mostly it was silent. I was doing a placement as a cycling officer at the local college, and my boss seemed not to mind what my working pattern was so long as things got done when they needed to be done by. These things were mostly paperwork, and the occasional newsletter. I liked the afternoons in this bed the best, when the sun would shine through the trees and create beautiful dappled textures on the duvet. Some days were worse than others.

Throughout the first UK lockdown, Wellcome were running a zine club on Instagram live each month and I joined in from bed. I'd watch the IG lives, and then call my best friend Jenny on whatsapp. I'd balance pens and paper and scissors and glue and watercolours, and prop my phone up and chat away as we worked. I remember vividly the last one, with a theme of 'care'. I remember it partly, I guess, because I took photos of my zine in bed with me, the light dappling around it.



In bed at Dunbar Place, April 24 2020



Credit: Asclepios by a sick bed, marble relief, 4th century B.C. Wellcome Collection.



5

*Florence Nightingale in her room in South Street*  
*from a photograph by Miss Bosanquet, 1906*



Harbour Place, April 2022



## Harbour Place

Our bedroom at Harbour Place faced east. We moved the week I started my PhD, which meant I did my induction on my neighbours wif. We moved because my mum needed to move in with us, and so we were looking for a 2-bed place. A friend I'd met working at Fife college said her neighbour was looking to rent out her house in Dalgety Bay, so we had gone to see it and agreed on the spot. It's on a strange estate, like something out of the ITV series *The Prisoner*. The house is directly on the fife coast: walk 2 minutes and you're at the shore. Our bedroom looked out onto a narrow strip of woodland again, this time called 'Binning Strip'. It's light in the mornings, rather than the afternoons. We painted the bedroom millennial pink and bought a king size bed.

I have a bookcase on my side of the bed – I've covered the back of it with wrapping paper with Moomins on it. It has books, some of my precious objects, and a couple of plastic tubs with various meds, ear plugs, my mouthguard, rocks, in them. Hanging on the wall next to the headboard on my side I have a small set of shelves in the shape of a house, and these have my best Sylvanian Family figures in. I didn't have these as a kid, but I have always wanted them and so I have been buying them as an adult. I have soft toys in my bed and more in a basket beside. My side of the bed is the side with the window – I have a sylvanian family canal boat on the windowsill, and one of those moisture collectors. The laundry basket is on my side of the bed, and a chest with bedding in it. Opposite the bed, in a small nook, is a desk – originally it was a bureau, but we swapped this with the large table that was

downstairs when my mum moved in and I needed space to work upstairs where I wasn't going to be interrupted. We upholstered the headboard of the bed in a beautiful dark blue floral patterned velvet fabric. Beside my bed, I have a wooden tray from IKEA that folds open.

I attend my therapy sessions from this bed – I don't know if you're not meant to do that, but its honestly the most comfortable place to do it from.

At Harbour Place we had a second bedroom too, facing the opposite way – set up for my mum, waiting for the border to open again. I spent the winter of 2020 in what would become her bedroom, using her bed as an office (the same bed from our bedroom on Dunbar Place). WFB – working from bed.

8

Much of my thesis was written across those two bedrooms. We stayed in that house until April 2023, two and a half years, which is the longest we've lived together in one place ever. My mum stayed after we left, and its her house, and her bedroom, now. She painted it a light blue.





Credit: French Bedroom, late 17th century, C. 1937. Narcissa Niblack Throne.





Credit: Nottingham: a verandah open to the air with a bed and a cot, each containing a child being treated for acute illness. Photograph, 1893. Wellcome Collection.



IKEA MELDAL Daybed

## **Lichfield Road**

When I was a teenager I asked my mum to get me an IKEA day bed, with black metal bars. At 17, shortly after my first overdose and contact with mental health services, I wrapped the whole thing in clingfilm to stop the bugs that flew overhead from landing on me. A few nights later I dismantled it and slept on a mattress on the floor. Eventually I started sleeping downstairs on the sofa and I never stopped. I don't know why I couldn't sleep in bed, but when I came back home, in between hospital admissions or when I didn't want to be alone in whatever rented flat I was in, I would come to my mum's and sleep downstairs, tv on.

In 2015, Abi and I needed to stay for a few months whilst we waited on the flat we were renting to be ready. I had to sleep upstairs again then, but by then my mum had got a new bed – a small double divan, for guests.

This small double is what I sleep in when I stay in Cambridge (correction: what I slept in when I stayed in Cambridge). For a while, when I was coming down to Wellcome after lockdowns lifted to read the zines, I would come and stay at my mum's old house, that she was moving out of and that my stepdad still lived in (then they sold it). My bedroom had been painted a very tasteful blue (a theme: my mum painting my old bedroom's blue). The carpet was the same though. I remember loving this carpet when I was little because I could run my feet across it to change its direction. One way green, the other blue. It was like the ocean.



Bellevue Hospital, New York City: a cell with bed seen through doorway. Photograph. Wellcome Collection.





PICU, Fulbourn Hospital, 2013

## **Fulbourn Hospital**

### **(i) PICU**

It is a stretch to call this foam cuboid, wrapped in dark blue plastic, a bed, but it is where I slept. It was like a piece of equipment you find at children's soft play. They had put a sheet on it, but with nothing to tuck it into it slipped around and bunched up. There was a pillow and a blanket. This was the PICU (Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit) – two side by side rooms on an acute admissions ward at Fulbourn Hospital. There was no other furniture, and the door was constantly propped open because, typically, if you were here it was because you were on 1-1 observations. A nurse or a HCA within 3 feet of you, at all times. They'd get a chair to sit in, to watch you. I didn't choose to spend much time in this bed. Instead I slept in a chair in the dining room. When I first was put in this room, it was because of my level of 'risk'. But I outstayed that risk, because there wasn't space in any of the other rooms in the hospital. There were no beds to move to.

### **(ii) Hospital Beds**

I didn't have my own room very often when I was a patient in psychiatric hospitals, only twice: my first stay in Coventry and during my final admission to a secure unit in 2014. This meant I didn't like to spend much time in bed in hospital – it was never very relaxing behind blue curtains for one, and I also often held onto a 'baseline' – get out of bed, stick to a routine, don't surrender. All the beds had the same thick plastic coating on the mattresses which gave me a rash, no room for my skin to breathe.

### **(iii) Police stations**

(I don't have any photos of the beds in Cambridge police station. I remember the way it was integrated into the wall, a smooth white ledge – and then had a thin blue plastic mattress on top. I'd been stripped and put into anti-ligature clothing, secured with Velcro, and I was cold, and I wasn't going to sleep anyway. I never had to stay in custody more than 24 hours.)



Credit: Alice James (reclining) and Katharine Loring, taken at the Royal Leamington Spa (England), c.1890



## **Alice James**

Alice James was the sister of the psychoanalyst William James, and the writer Henry James. She was 'sick' her whole adult life – diagnosed with hysteria, and later breast cancer which would kill her. In her final three years Alice kept a journal recording her life in her room and her everyday experiences. It was published in its entirety in 1982 – both brothers opposed its publication in their lifetimes. Henry James described how 'she simplified too much, shut up in her sick room, exercised her wondrous vigour of judgment on too small a scrap of what really surrounded her' (I read about this in Alice Hatrick's *Ill Feelings* and you can too). Henry didn't doubt Alice's abilities as a writer; it was the location she wrote of that was the issue. I find myself indulging in a fantasy where Alice James made zines from bed.



Nana in bed downstairs at Lichfield Road, with children (Lea, Zoe, Alice, Lauren?)

## **Nana**

I don't think I ever thought about the fact that when my Nana would come to stay she slept in a bed in the front room. I don't think I ever thought about my Nana as disabled, or her experience of disability. She died when I was 16.

I remember dancing around the living room with her wooden stick performing 'Burlington Bertie from Bow' after Julie Andrews (badly, since I'd never seen the film - she would sing the song and I'd twirl the stick around like a baton, lift my top hat and remove the gloves at the appropriate moment). At the supported accommodation she lived in the whole time I knew her, her bed was off the living room, concealed in an alcove by a heavy curtain.



Credit: A child in bed, its parents praying to the Madonna del Parto. Oil painting. Wellcome Collection. Source: Wellcome Collection.





Norfolk Street, April 2014 (10 years ago)

## **Go to Bed**

I've held tightly onto a few skills from DBT, one of which is "act opposite" – do the opposite of what you want to (usually because what you want to is self-harm). The opposite of self-harm is not self-care. The opposite of action is inaction – I took "act opposite" to mean, don't do anything. So, when things feel so bad or overwhelming I might hurt myself, I go to bed and I lie very, very still. I don't have to do this so often these days. I go to bed and I don't allow myself to move. I breathe, of course, shallow breaths with the top of my chest. I stay as still as I can. I don't trust myself to move because even a move as innocent as adjusting the covers could fall into something else – I read somewhere your hand decides to move before you decide to move it. I don't trust myself, so I restrain myself. I fall asleep in this position – often, I fall asleep in this position because once I have restrained myself like this it is very hard to know when I am safe to release. Sometimes Abi will come and lie with me and eventually we can get up again together. I have a weighted blanket, I use it sometimes for regulating, for restless legs, and sometimes I use it as an additional part of this restraint – like someone else is taking a bit of the responsibility. I've been restrained before, on hospital beds. That was different (?)

There's another DBT skill – “take a vacation”. I can't remember what acronym that falls under. They just mean take a break, away from it all (not actually go on holiday, I think). I go to bed and bury myself in covers and disappear. I'm not avoiding anything, it's not a flight response, I don't feel myself carried away in dreaming or imagining. I just stop trying so hard to draw a line between myself and everything else. A nice break.



view from bed, Alexandra Street, February 2024

## **Alexandra Street**

We moved again in May 2023, the final move, I hope, during this PhD. We brought our bed with us to our new flat. The bedroom is upstairs – the flat is a maisonette, with the loft conversion upstairs creating a bathroom and two small bedrooms. The window is huge, and opens either cracked open at an angle, or swung open wide – it takes up quite a lot of the room open, and I worry about bugs flying in. I have to clamber over Abi to get in and out of bed, but when I sit up in it I can see the spires and rooftops of Kirkcaldy and birds swooping. If you look out of the window to the left, you can see the sea, and Edinburgh across the Firth of Forth. Last New Years Eve (23-24) Abi was working a night shift at the hospice, and I sat in bed and watched the fireworks. We have a second bedroom, which has a single day bed and is painted bright yellow, with a mural to look like Moominvalley. I work there mostly.

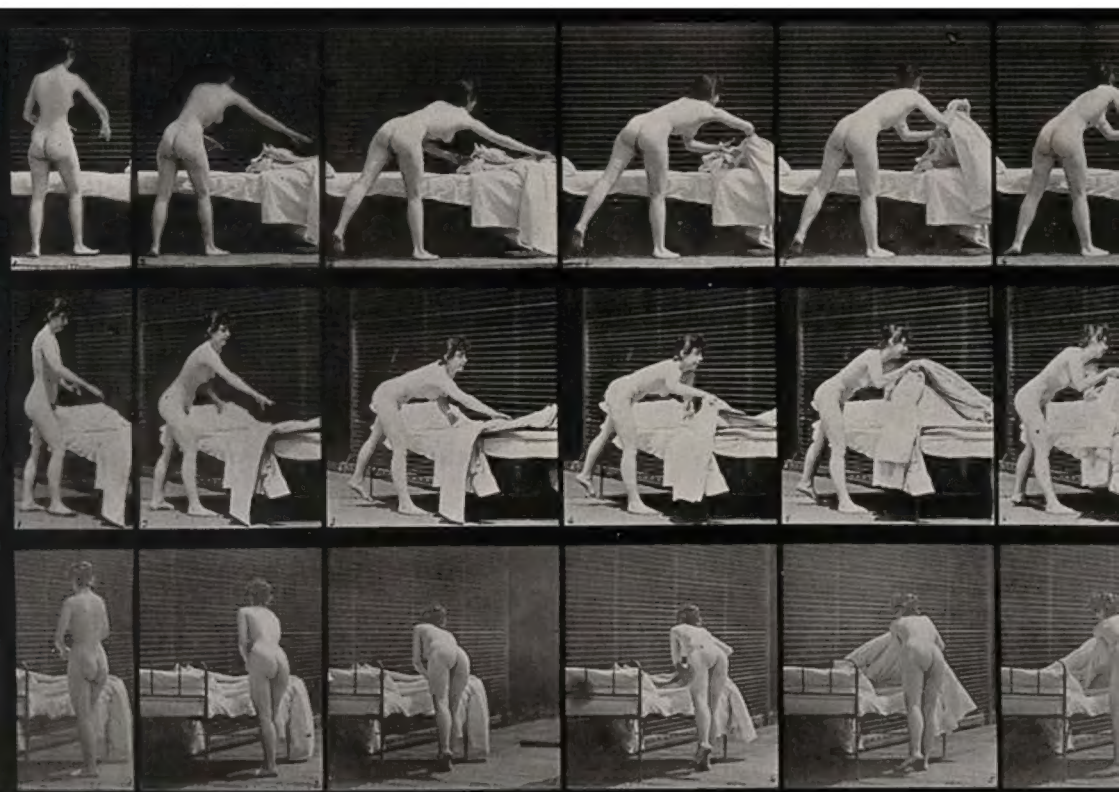


This zine was written across multiple beds, and digitally compiled in this one.

April 2024, Kirkcaldy.







Credit: A woman making a bed. Collotype after Edward Muybridge, 1887.